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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Telcon with President of Russia (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
President Putin

Notetakers: Nikki Williams, Colin Crosby,
David Lee, and Leslie Radcliff

Interpreter: Peter Afanassenko

DATE, TIME February 4, 2003, 7:35 7:47 a.m. EST
AND PLACE: The Oval Office

The President: Vladimir, how are you today? (U)

President Putin: I'm okay. How about you? (U)

The President: I'm on my way to Houston to give a speech to the families about the grief we all share, but I'm feeling fine. Laura and I were eating breakfast and I saw in the newspaper you and Silvio having dinner with the temperature outside -6 degrees Fahrenheit. That's why next time, I'm coming when the weather's going to be warm, so that when we sit outside the soup will be hot. (U)

President Putin: Yes. Actually, I promised him it was about -24 degrees Celsius. (U)

The President: Listen. Very quickly, Vladimir, I want to say a couple of things. First, tomorrow, Colin Powell will be giving a speech to the UN. In the speech will be two points I think you will find interesting. First, there will be clear evidence that Saddam has no intention of disarming. And, second, there is a clear terrorist link, a clear al-Qaida link between Saddam Hussein's government and al-Qaida; agents who are trained and manufacture poisons that can be used against us and you. I want to send over a high-level delegation to brief you on the evidence that we have. I think you will find it threatening, to you and us. We will continue to work, Vladimir, of course, with the Security Council. As I said publicly the other day, if there is an opportunity for a resolution, fine. So long as it does not delay the consequences or prohibit nations, our nations, from achieving the objective of disarming Saddam. And, finally, in Powell's speech, I want you to hear, to get your representatives

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to listen very carefully for connections with Chechnya through the Pankisi Gorge by al-Qaida in Iraq. And so, that's why I'm calling to stay in touch with you prior to Colin Powell's speech. And, we, of course, can talk afterwards and continue our discussion because I consider you a friend and important participant in this process. (S)

President Putin: George, thank you very much for this call. I should say to you that Powell's speech is of great interest. Our personal contact is very important to me and I value your personal opinion. I talked to Silvio Berlusconi and he told me about his visit to Washington. I just want to tell you that he is your most consistent supporter in Europe. Of course, you have a lot of supporters in Europe, but he is quite excited and he has a tough character. We will work towards fully disarming Hussein. I told Berlusconi this and I'm telling you this now - in the future, we need to press him until he disarms and until we get the required solution, and of course, we ought to look at the work done by the inspectors. We need now to know what they really need to succeed and what conditions we must put before Iraq. We need to know what documents they need and what access to what sites they need. We need to know if Saddam is hindering the inspectors or is cooperating with them. Blair called me yesterday and described to me the understanding he has with you and about the work on the next Security Council resolution. We will listen to Colin Powell's speech with great attention. I was a little surprised to hear about these links between al-Qaida and Iraq. Of course, we have to treat this seriously. We will listen with great attention to what is said about Chechnya. I wish you courage in your talks with the survivors' families in Houston. I, too, know how it is. I had to do the same thing with the families of the sailors lost on the submarine Kursk. I know this is a very difficult job but you're a courageous man. We could talk in St. Petersburg and make joint cooperation in space one of the issues; that is, if you and your specialists want to do this. Thank you very much. (S)

The President: Thank you, Vladimir. I'll talk to you soon. (U)

President Putin: I embrace you. All my best to you. (U)

The President: All the best. (U)

President Putin: Bye. (U)

The President: Bye. (U)

-- End of Conversation --